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SUBJECT: DISGRUNTLED EX-COMBATANTS PARALYZE BOUAKE OVER
PAYMENT DISPUTE

¶1. (U) The demobilization and disarmament of the Forces Nouvelles (FAFN) continue to be problematic for the government. One June 16, more than 1000 troops paralyzed Bouake, demanding payment of promised monies. According to press reports, the action was organized by soldiers who were to be integrated in the new joint army, which is to be formed as part of the peace process. The disgruntled soldiers were claiming payments of 90,000 francs cfa (about \$213) each, which they were promised they would receive monthly for a three-month period as part of the peace agreement. Calm returned to the city with the intervention of their regional Commander, Sherif Ousmane, who pointed out that the source of the problem was not the Forces Nouvelles leadership but rather the difficult financial situation of the government of Cote d'Ivoire. This likely brought little satisfaction to the regrouped soldiers whose only other source of income is money collected from racketeering at road stops for their survival.

¶2. (U) However, the calm was short-lived. This morning (June 18,) soldiers believed to be FAFN have again taken their protests to the streets, shutting down Bouake for a second day. Gunfire was heard throughout the city. Streets were void of pedestrian and vehicle traffic, and businesses were shut. Thus far, there are no reports of injuries. Sources on the ground in Bouake believe the gunfire was not directed toward specific targets but rather random firing into the air.

¶3. (SBU) The government's apparent inability to fund costs related to the regroupment of Forces Nouvelles soldiers, and the impact on the security environment could pose a serious threat to the viability of the November 30 date for presidential elections. PM Soro has repeatedly called on the international community to provide more financial assistance to help resolve this issue. The Ivorian press reported June 18 that President Gbagbo, along with Burkina Faso President Blaise Compaore, met with Libyan leader Mouammar Kadhafi at the community of Sahelian-Saharan States (CEN-SAD) meeting that is taking place in Benin. Kadhafi reportedly promised to partially finance the disarmament if there is a "blocage" or freezing of funding. There is concern that if the FAFN are not paid soon, the protests could spread to other areas in the North and further complicate the peace process. Post will continue to monitor and report on developments.
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